Swahili Medical Dictionary and Phrasebook

MJF Cooper

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Acknowledgements

To Moses and Pippa

To my wife Sarah Anne Cooper

To my mother Margaret Elizabeth Cooper and my father John Eric Cooper

In memory of and with thanks to Sheikh Salim Massud Ali Riyami

With thanks to Baba Amos, Bibi Sai, Mr Tim Fison and Dr Roland Mathan

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Introduction

This book is intended for doctors, nurses, students and other clinicians working with Swahili speakers. It will also be useful for expatriates living in East Africa. It is hoped that readers will find it helpful in articulating what they wish to express during consultations. It will also aid the learner by expanding their Swahili vocabulary. Relevant non-medical terms and examples of typical responses from patients have been included where possible. Some examples of less standard Swahili used in countries such as the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have been added.

Kiswahili is the lingua franca for most of Eastern Africa, in particular Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and eastern Congo. There are also significant numbers of speakers outside Africa, for example in Oman, South Africa and England. Swahili is a rich language that has incorporated words from a wide range of sources: Bantu languages, Arabic, English, Portuguese, Persian, German and French. It is a thriving, rapidly evolving language. For these reasons, the way it is used varies enormously according to whoever is speaking it. Particular words chosen may reflect the speaker's gender, age, mother tongue or religion. The expressions used in this book are based upon clinical consultations with Swahili speakers from different East African countries and of different ages and backgrounds. I have attempted to reflect this richness in this book.

I have intentionally included phrases for use with Muslim Swahili speakers. These are essential to effective communication and friendship in many parts of Africa. It is also particularly appropriate given Swahili's Islamic roots on the coast of East Africa and the rich vocabulary of everyday Swahili directly derived from Arabic.

Certain expressions can prove difficult to translate between English and Swahili. This book is intended to be a practical tool rather than a list of literal translations. Where more than one translation is possible, I have endeavoured to put the most frequently used version first. Where necessary, I have verified translations using a range of dictionaries. These are acknowledged in the final chapter. Some translations may inevitably not appeal to every speaker. This is most often because of diverse local usage of terms in Swahili. Nevertheless, I welcome your comments, suggestions and criticisms. Please email these to me.

This book has been repeatedly revised and expanded since it was first published privately in 2006. Most notably these changes have been undertaken since its favourable review in the Bulletin of Tanzanian Affairs and its submission to "Google Book Search".

I am deeply indebted to the individuals mentioned in the Acknowledgements; without their help I could not have completed this work.

Although there are others more qualified than me to write this book, in the current absence of any such resource, I hope that this offering will go some way to filling such an important gap.

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Bora kinga kuliko tiba

Prevention is better than cure

2pm	=	Saa nane mchana
3pm	=	Saa tisa mchana
4pm	=	Saa kumi jioni
5pm	=	Saa kumi na moja jioni
6pm	=	Saa kumi na mbili jioni
7pm	=	Saa moja usiku
8pm	=	Saa mbili usiku
9pm	=	Saa tatu usiku
10pm	=	Saa nne usiku
11pm	=	Saa tano usiku

Two hours ago	=	Masaa mawili yaliyopita
In the middle of the night	=	Usiku wa manane

Muslim Prayer Times

The following times can also be useful for indicating when to take medicines and for appointments.

Alfajiri	=	Dawn
Adhuhuri	=	Midday
Alasiri	=	Afternoon
Magharibi	=	Sunset
Isha	=	About eight pm

During times of illness, the frequency of praying may be reduced if instructed by an Imam or at the request of a doctor.

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Notes